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Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP86T00608R000400040038-4

Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP86T00608R000400040038-4

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STAFF NOTES:

Middle East

Africa

South Asia

Secret

139
NO. 0841/75
August 12, 1975

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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA



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Algeria-France

Historical Frictions Linger

Recent incidents involving Algerian workers in France and French citizens of Algerian extraction visiting Algeria have marred bilateral relations.

The bombing in late July of an Algerian office building and a cultural center in France set off a storm of press criticism in Algiers of Paris' alleged toleration of and indifference to attacks on Algerian interests. Shortly thereafter, two children of harkis--Algerians who sided with the French during the war for independence--were prevented from leaving Algiers. To retaliate, harkis seized as hostages several Algerian workers in France. French authorities finally intervened to stop the incidents, and Algiers released the children.

The sense of recrimination that accompanied these disputes is a legacy of the bitter colonial period that persists despite the efforts of both governments to build a more cooperative relationship. French President Giscard d'Estaing's visit to Algeria last April--the first to independent Algeria by a French chief of state--helped lay the basis for improved relations. For its part, Algiers recognizes the need for good relations. France remains Algeria's primary trading partner, the most likely source of future foreign investment, and an important safety valve for reducing unemployment at home. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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SECRETSpanish SaharaMauritanian-Moroccan Agreement

25X1 The agreement between Mauritania and Morocco on the partition of Spanish Sahara after the Spanish withdraw appears to be little more than a general understanding. [REDACTED] 25X1

[REDACTED] the two countries have an oral understanding--but no written agreement--that Mauritania will gain control over the southern portion of the region, Rio de Oro, and Morocco will control the northern portion, Saguia El Hamra.

25X1 The line of demarcation [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will start at Corbo Bojador on the Atlantic, and generally follow the 26th parallel. Such a partition would leave the potentially lucrative Bu Craa phosphates mines in Moroccan hands. 25X1

There is likely to be much haggling and recrimination over the implementation of this plan. Mauritania badly needs additional funds to underwrite its development programs, and undoubtedly will seek some share of the phosphate revenues for not opposing Morocco's claims. In addition, nomads living along the projected partition line give their allegiance to their tribal group rather than to any political entity; their movements will be a source of continuing border disputes.

25X1 Morocco probably intends that revelation of the agreement will increase pressure on Spain to withdraw from Spanish Sahara before the International Court of Justice issues its opinion on the disposition of the territory. Rabat then would be in a strong position to implement the agreement with Mauritania to meet its own purposes. [REDACTED] 25X1

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Nigeria*Considering New States*

As promised by Head of State Brigadier Muhammed in his first policy statement, the military government has appointed a panel to examine the question of creating additional states. Muhammed has not yet committed himself on this politically sensitive issue, although former head of state Yakubu Gowon did finally pronounce himself in favor of creating more states last October.

Disparities in size and wealth among Nigeria's 12 states have been a persistent source of complaint among minority tribes and some groups within Nigeria's large tribes. These elements regard the creation of more states as a means of gaining stronger and more representative voice in the federal system.

For the new regime, the establishment of additional states would provide an opportunity to assign additional state governorships to aspiring military officers. The government would, however, run the risk of opening a Pandora's box of agitation for the creation of numerous tribally-oriented and economically weak mini-states.

The present state system, which reflects a balance of six northern and six southern states, was created in 1967 by Gowon to replace the four regional administrative divisions that existed at that time. His aim was to prevent the imminent secession of the predominantly Ibo eastern region by reducing the east's fear of domination by the north and to ease the fears of minority tribes in all regions.

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Rivalry between the regions during the early 1960's was responsible for the breakdown of civilian rule, two military coups, and a civil war. The state system, by providing political balance among Nigeria's competing regional and tribal interests, was one of Gowon's main achievements.

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